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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: CANADIAN CABINET TO DISCUSS MISSILE DEFENSE

REF: 02 OTTAWA 3101

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Brian Flora,
Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Following up on high-level consultations held in Washington January 28, the Canadian cabinet will be meeting soon to discuss potential missile defense cooperation with the United States. Missile defense is currently on the calendar for the February 25 Cabinet meeting (Cabinet normally meets each Tuesday), but this may slip to a later date. Foreign Minister Graham and Defense Minister McCallum, who decided in October to accelerate dialogue with the U.S. on this issue (reftel), hope to get some guidance from Prime Minister Chretien on how to proceed.

12. (C) Foreign Affairs (DFAIT) and Defense (DND) officials got a clear message in the January 28 meeting that the missile defense program is progressing rapidly, and that there are costs to delaying a decision on Canadian participation. Vincent Rigby, DND Director of Arms and Proliferation Control Policy, told us that the GoC had always assumed that we would want to use NORAD as part of the missile defense command structure. Now that the U.S. has decided on STRATCOM as overall command and NORTHCOM as executing command for North America, NORAD appears to be more of an afterthought. While U.S. officials made it clear that we were leaving the door open for a NORAD role, Rigby's sense was that NORTHCOM was the natural choice as executing command for North America, and that it would be difficult to change that down the road.

13. (C) Daniel Bon, DND Director General for Policy Planning, told us that the lack of a definable "need" for Canadian participation made it more difficult to sell this to Cabinet. He noted the absence of U.S. plans for NORAD participation or for missile defense installations in Canada, although acknowledging that Canada's indecision had kept it on the sidelines. Bon believed that Chretien did not want missile defense participation to be part of his "legacy" in his last year in office, and would punt the decision to his successor.

14. (C) Ron Hoffman, Foreign Affairs (DFAIT) Director for Defense and Security Relations, told us that the GoC would have a lot of work to do with Parliament and the Canadian public in selling Canadian participation. He noted that a recent Commons Foreign Affairs Committee report, specifically recommending that the GoC not participate in missile defense, was unhelpful in this regard. The GoC's increased interest in missile defense was still largely under the radar, Hoffman continued, as there was little general awareness of a shift in Government policy.

15. (C) COMMENT: DFAIT and DND are hoping that they will at least get a green light from Cabinet to participate in certain aspects of missile defense. Given near-term decisions in the U.S. on missile defense industrial projects, and the Command decisions that have already been taken, DFAIT and DND would like to move forward on industrial cooperation and at least leave the door open to NORAD participation. Beyond that, it is not clear that Prime Minister Chretien will be ready to make a clear decision on Canadian participation. Missile defense remains controversial in Ottawa because of arms control concerns (i.e., weaponization of space), and the Liberal Party is already divided over Iraq. Given the likelihood that the GoC will be making a controversial decision to participate militarily in an Iraq campaign, Chretien is unlikely to give more than a muffled response on missile defense.

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